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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5193
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS OUAGADOUGOU 000551

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SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [ELAB](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [UV](#)

SUBJECT: BURKINA FASO STRIVES TO ADDRESS CHILD TRAFFICKING ISSUES.

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Burkina Faso is a source and transit country for trafficked children destined for labor or sexual exploitation in the sub-region. In the past year, and in order to reverse this trend, the Government of Burkina Faso has undertaken a number of noteworthy anti-trafficking in persons (TIP) actions. The June 16 celebration of the Day of the African Child was an example of the GOBF's efforts to combat TIP through sensitization campaigns. It has also launched a child vulnerability study and a TIP survey. END SUMMARY

The strategic city of Banfora hosts a major event:

¶2. (SBU) On June 16, and in line with its yearlong anti-TIP actions, the Government of Burkina Faso celebrated the 19th edition of the Day of the Africa Child by hosting a large-scale sensitization program presided over by Burkina Faso's First Lady, Chantal Compaore. The event was hosted in the western city of Banfora, about 275 miles South West of Ouagadougou near the Cote d'Ivoire border (Note: Banfora is the capital city of Cascades Region. End Note.) The Cascades region is the closest region to the Ivoirian cotton plantations and gold mines where most trafficked Burkinabe children go to work.

¶3. (SBU) More than six thousand people (including 2,000 Burkinabe children and 210 Ivoirian children) participated in the event. Also present were Burkinabe cabinet members, parliamentarians, local authorities, traditional chiefs, and religious leaders. In attendance were several international and NGO leaders, including representatives from UNICEF, WHO, Plan International, and Save the Children Canada. These institutions funded 4,000 T-shirts printed with anti TIP messages that were distributed to participants and observers as part of the sensitization drive. Children took center stage during the event and emceed the show, delivered speeches and produced sketches. Organizers believe that this event reached approximately six thousand persons in addition to the participants.

TIP vulnerability study: The First Lady speaks out

¶3. (SBU) A 2009 study conducted by the Regional Directorate of Social Action and National Solidarity in the Cascades region concluded that 10,737 orphans and other children are potential trafficking victims. The study demonstrated that Burkinabe children are particularly susceptible to labor trafficking networks in Cote d'Ivoire. Representatives from the children's parliament, the Governor of Cascades Region (Mrs. Fatoumata Legma), NGOs, UNICEF representatives and the First Lady herself have spoken out publicly denouncing the situation. They deplored that, in spite of efforts made by the government, the TIP situation has worsened in Burkina Faso. The children's spokesperson denounced the use of child labor in mining sites and plantations as well as the many diseases, malnutrition, and mistreatment/violence that afflict children. The First Lady called for both collective and individual actions to improve children's well-being. She raised the need to send children to school, to vaccinate them, provide them with a safe and balanced diet. The Minister of Social Action and National Solidarity echoed those thoughts and said she was committed to enhancing and multiplying actions toward improving children's living conditions.

The GOBF's efforts to address TIP:

¶4. (SBU) On June 15, the GOBF and its partners (including UNICEF, Plan International, and Terre des Hommes Lausanne) launched a three-month, one billion CFA (approximately two million USD) nationwide study pertaining to the use of child labor in the mining and handicraft sectors. As part of the study, 75 interviewers and 4 consultants have been hired for the project that is intended to address the worst forms of child labor and the children trafficked for labor purposes. Conclusion of that report are expected to be made public before December 2009.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: While in the past year Burkina Faso has made laudable efforts to address, sensitize and combat child trafficking in its worst forms, there is still a long way to go. In Burkina Faso, poverty is a determining factor in vulnerability to child trafficking and child labor (Note: In 2008, the UN Human Development index rated Burkina Faso second to last among all countries. End Note.) In addition to poverty, the insufficient funds and human resources dedicated to combating trafficking, coupled with the poor enforcement of existing laws have been obstacles to the eradication of TIP in Burkina Faso. END COMMENT

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